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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5906  
INFO RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 001030

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE  
DEPT ALSO PASS TO USTR  
DEPT FOR WHA/CEN, DRL/AWH, DRL/ILCSR  
DOL FOR CROMERO, PCHURCH

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [KDEM](#) [GT](#)  
SUBJECT: TWO CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS MURDERED

¶1. (U) On August 7, Edwin Portillo, treasurer of the Pension Administration Board and member of the port workers union of the National Santo Tomas Pot Company (Empornac), was shot and killed by two unidentified assailants in Puerto Barrios, Izabal. Portillo, who was recently elected president of the water committee of his neighborhood El Manantial, was to take office August 10. According to a union member, Portillo had been collecting signatures for a petition opposing the new assistant to the Deputy Director of Maritime Operations, and the workers were to present the petition to port authorities on the day of the shooting. In October 2007, Anacleto Aragon was similarly killed a few days before he was to take office as president of the El Manantial water committee. The Attorney General's Office plans to investigate two hypotheses -- one connecting the killing to Portillo's union activities, the other involving his water committee activities.

¶2. (U) On August 7, in an unrelated incident a day before the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, indigenous community leader Antonio Morales was shot and killed by unidentified assailants in front of his home in Tixel in Colotenango, Huehuetenango. Morales was reportedly shot four times. He had recently received death threats from criminal groups operating in the region. Morales, a member of the Committee of Peasant Unity (CUC), was known as an activist for indigenous rights, in particular defending natural resources and opposing mining projects in Huehuetenango. He served as First Councilman of Colotenango Municipality. On June 23, Colotenango passed a community referendum, becoming one of 26 municipalities to reject mining in its jurisdiction.

¶3. (SBU) NGO Human Rights Legal Action Center (CALDH) Executive Director Mario Minera told polff that Morales (a supporter of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity party which has opposed mining) began receiving death threats from former members of the Civil Action Patrol (PAC) after stepping down from his Council position. Minera condemned the killing and called on the Attorney General's Office, which he claimed did not send a representative to the crime scene, to conduct a thorough investigation. He also urged the GOG to guarantee the security of those who defend and promote human rights.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: These murders are the latest in a series of violent actions against labor activists. While the motives for these killings remain unclear pending investigation, impunity and rampant violence continue to affect all sectors of Guatemalan society. Human rights leaders are hopeful that the recent change in leadership at the Attorney General's Office will translate into more effective investigations and prosecutions to combat the pervasive climate of impunity.  
McFarland